

The Gospel of John

The Supremacy of Service

John 13:1-20

With the end approaching, Christ and his disciples gather into an upper room to observe what we know as the Last Supper. With the cross now hours away, He spends time teaching His disciples for the last time. One of the first lessons was one of humility and service, as Christ washed the disciples' feet.

The Setting

- This takes place on Tuesday evening at the beginning of the 14th of Nisan, the day before Passover.
- The Last Supper held in an "upper room", a room built on the roof of a house.

The Story

- The setting of the Supper – vs. 1
 - This is not the Passover meal, which is eaten on evening of the 15th.
 - This is *after* the Supper and does not coincide with the usual washings performed by pious Jews before a meal.
- Judas is still present but has already determined his course – vs. 2
- Christ's attitude in washing the disciple's feet – vs. 3
 - "Though he well enough knew, that *all power was given him in heaven and earth*, as in Matthew 28:18; that he was his disciples' Lord, that he came from God, and was now going to God again; yet to show how much he loved his disciples, and to set them a pattern of humility, and teach them brotherly love, and that he *came not* in the estate wherein he yet was *to be ministered unto, but to minister*, Matthew 20:28." - Matthew Poole
- The Lord washes the disciple's feet, one of the humblest of jobs for a servant – vs. 4-5
 - This is likely a response to the bickering in Luke 22:24-30
- Peter questions the Lord, Who responds that that he will understand later – vs. 6-7
- Peter balks again, and the Lord who responds that he would have "no part" in Christ – vs. 8
 - This is explained further in vs. 10
 - To have "no part" in Christ appears seems to harken back to an Old Testament phrase about having no right to property and acceptance into the nation – Deuteronomy 10:9, 12:12. 14:27. 14:29, 18:1; Joshua 14:4, 18:7, 22:25, 22:27; II Samuel 20:1.
- Peter wants to go all out and be washed head to toe – vs. 9
- Christ explains washing vs. cleansing – vs. 10

- A person who has bathed does not need to bathe again if they only got their feet dirty. They just need to wash their feet!
- So, it is with the Christian and sin. We have been washed clean through the blood of Christ (1 John 1:7). We do not need to be saved again if we contact sin, but we do need to cleanse ourselves from it (Ephesians 4:20-32)
- Christ alludes to Judas, whose heart was still impure – vs. 11
- Christ reveals the lesson is about illustrating that they should in humility serve one another - vs. 12-15
 - There are those that practice foot washing as an ordinance of the church. Nowhere are we commanded to carry on the act, but rather to carry on the lesson.
- Contentment is the cure for contention – vs. 16-17
- Christ alludes to Judas as fulfilling Psalm 41:9 – vs. 18
- Christ foretells this for their benefit in the chaotic hours to come – vs. 19
- The chain of receiving – vs. 20
 - “Our Lord spoke this to comfort his disciples: he showed them that, although they should be rejected by many, they would be received by several; and that whoever received them should reap the utmost benefit by it.” – Adam Clarke